

Regional Water Quality Control Board
North Coast Region
Executive Officer's Summary Report
April 15, 2021

ITEM: 5

SUBJECT: Update on Early Implementation Activities in the Lower Russian River Communities of Monte Rio and Villa Grande (Charles Reed, Alisha O'Loughlin – Sonoma County)

BOARD ACTION: This item is an informational item only; no action will be taken by the Regional Water Board.

BACKGROUND: On August 12, 2019, the Regional Water Board adopted the Action Plan for the Russian River Watershed Pathogen Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL). The Action Plan is a program of implementation that establishes (1) a prohibition against the discharge of fecal waste material to state waters within the watershed, (2) specific actions for entities identified as contributing sources of pathogens, and (3) an Advanced Protection Management Program (APMP) that sets forth standards and requirements for all onsite wastewater treatment systems (OWTS) near pathogen-impaired water bodies within the Watershed where OWTS have been determined to be contributing to the impairment. Staff anticipates that the TMDL Action Plan will obtain approval by the State Water Resources Control Board (State Water Board), the State's Office of Administrative Law (OAL), and the U.S. EPA in 2022¹. Once approved by the State Water Board and OAL, the TMDL Action Plan and the APMP become effective and program of implementation begins for existing, new and replacement OWTS.

Pursuant to the TMDL Action Plan, owners of OWTS within the boundaries of the APMP whose OWTS is failing, whose OWTS is a cesspool or other substandard waste disposal system, or whose OWTS accepts waste flows in excess of its treatment and disposal capacity will be required to take corrective actions to replace, repair, or modify their OWTS to comply with APMP minimum standards and requirements. Review and approval for corrective actions for OWTS not meeting APMP minimum requirements will be the responsibility of Permit Sonoma, consistent with the 2016 Memorandum of Understanding between Sonoma County and the North Coast Regional Water Board and Sonoma County's Local Agency Management Program (LAMP). The LAMP, which incorporates the APMP minimum requirements, is currently undergoing its final local public review period and is anticipated to be considered for approval by the Sonoma

¹ As described in the article "Update on the Adoption of the Russian River Pathogen TMDL" in the April 15, 2021 Executive Officer's Report, following a 45-day public review period, reconsideration of a few elements of the TMDL and Action Plan by the Regional Board is scheduled to occur at the October 7-8, 2021 Regional Board meeting. If reapproved by the Regional Board, the TMDL and Action Plan are expected to receive a State Water Board public hearing in spring of 2022.

County Board of Supervisors in September. Following local approval of the LAMP, the LAMP will be provided to the Regional Water Board for its consideration to approve the LAMP as Sonoma County's OWTS management program.

The APMP will be in effect in twelve¹ HUC-12 subwatersheds where there is direct evidence of pollution and impairment of the REC-1 beneficial use. In some of these subwatersheds, particularly subwatersheds that include communities in the lower Russian River and in Fitch Mountain in Healdsburg, there is a large percentage of parcels with OWTS that predate adopted local standards for siting and design and these parcels are at locations that are small and steep so as to make the repair and/or replacement of individual OWTS to meet APMP requirements infeasible or cost prohibitive for some OWTS owners. For these areas, the TMDL Action Plan expressed support for community-based wastewater treatment and disposal solutions that provide a path to compliance with APMP requirements.

Even though the TMDL Action Plan is not yet in effect, the Regional Water Board and our local partners have been developing the framework for early implementation of some components of the APMP, recognizing the challenges facing homeowners and renters needing OWTS repair or replacement in some areas of the Watershed. In 2018, Regional Water Board staff and representatives from the County of Sonoma assembled a community group comprised of volunteers from the lower Russian River communities of Monte Rio, Villa Grande, Guerneville, and Hacienda to participate in a project to investigate community solutions to the wastewater disposal challenges in these communities and to serve as a pilot project for other communities facing similar challenges in complying with APMP requirements. This 12-person group, known as the Lower Russian River Citizens Advisory Group (CAG), was tasked with assisting Regional Water Board and Sonoma County staff in identifying technical and regulatory solutions to wastewater disposal challenges, investigating funding options, and securing public and private funding for local APMP compliance actions. It is hoped that this project will serve as a pilot project and APMP implementation model that can be expanded to other communities in the Watershed where OWTS owners face similar wastewater disposal challenges.

In August 2019, with input from the CAG and Regional Water Board staff, the Sonoma County Water Agency (Sonoma Water) submitted a Plan of Study to the State Water Resources Control Board's Division of Financial Assistance (DFA) for a project to analyze alternatives for compliance with APMP requirements for wastewater disposal in the vicinity of Monte Rio and Villa Grande communities. The Monte Rio and Villa Grande Wastewater Project will have three phases: 1) Feasibility Study Assessment and Report 2) Design and Environmental Documentation, and 3) Construction. The Plan of Study requests \$1 Million for Phase 1 of the project, which will evaluate potential solutions to achieve the goal of providing adequate wastewater treatment to the target communities. The grant award has been approved by DFA and the grant agreement is expected to receive final approval in April. Phases 2 and 3 will proceed sequentially after recommended projects are identified in the Feasibility Report and each will include new applications for grant and loan funding assistance.

DISCUSSION: The purpose of this informational item is to update the Regional Water Board on these early TMDL implementation activities in the Lower Russian River communities of Monte Rio and Villa Grande.

Following the presentations at, staff welcome comments from the public and Board members and will be available to answer questions.

RECOMMENDATION: Not Applicable

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS:

1. Russian River Watershed Pathogen TMDL Action Plan [TMDL Action Plan Action Plan for the Russian River Watershed Pathogen Total Maximum Daily Load \(TMDL\) \(ca.gov\)](#)
2. 2016 Memorandum of Understanding between Sonoma County and the North Coast Regional Water Board [Russian River TMDL MOU Redacted.pdf \(ca.gov\)](#)

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